

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

LOVE REPAYS LOVE

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In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I ask your pardon for my sins, and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph my father and lord, my guardian angel intercede for me.

We read in the first letter of St. John, “In this is the love, not that we have loved God, but that he has first loved us and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God has so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” In this passage of St. John, we see that love, the love of God is the primary source of love. And that our love is only a response. And it’s a great response. But it’s a response to somebody who knows us and loves us, created us, and will save us.

St. John continues and says, “No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.” St. John implies that love is what makes God visible in this world. And so, when we have a relationship with Love, with God, and we respond and correspond to God’s love, by actually loving our neighbor, and are serving our neighbor and giving glory to God, we are doing what St. Josemaria said often, that “love is with love repaid.”

And in this meditation, I want to focus on this very idea that “love is with love repaid” and delve into it more deeply. What does it mean that the only way we can pay back love is with love? Well, actually, if you look at the first reading of the second Sunday of Lent, we read in Genesis:

“The Lord said to Abraham,” or to Abram, I’m sorry, “go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the Earth shall find blessing in you.”

So, these are great blessings from God to Abram. Great promises, great prophecies we could say. It really shows that God loves Abram. And what does Abram do? Abram went as the Lord directed him. In other words, Abram obeyed God. And he corresponded to the love of God, through his loving obedience and through his docility, to this mission that he had received to inherit this land and to take all his family there. Love is with love repaid.

Now, what can we say about buying love? Well, we know that money does not buy love, you know, even though a lot of people seem to think that. Maybe they don’t admit to it in theory, but certainly, they tend to it in practice. And we see it all the time with people, you know, who want to attract, maybe their girlfriend or whatever, with a car, you know, “I have the cool car” or

“I’ll give you a very expensive diamond ring” or “we’ll go on vacation together” or something like that. It’s very attractive. But money doesn’t buy love, money doesn’t buy, or appearances don’t buy love, you know?

And I cannot exchange anything material. I cannot even say, “I’ll give you all my time in order to correspond to the love that you have given me.” No, actually, it’s not about paying back with anything. Love is about God’s 100% that He gives us. He actually has nothing else to give us, except himself. And that’s what he gives us. And he gives us, He doesn’t give us something, he gives us himself entirely. Think of the Eucharist. There’s nothing else for him to give.

He has kind of, you know, mysteriously, quote, unquote, “run out of something to give us” because, well, and that would be blasphemous if it wasn’t referring to the Eucharist because, you know, how could you say, “God ran out of things?” He can create more things. But in this case, when he gives himself to us like that, as he does in the Eucharist, he has nothing else to give.

It’s incredible how much he loves us to give his only begotten Son so that we could be saved. You know, he sent his only begotten Son for our salvation. That’s extraordinary. That’s 100%. God is loving us with his 100%. And so, how can we pay that back? Of course, we can’t pay that back. It’s beyond us to be able to correspond to all that. In fact, all the gifts that we have are coming from God anyway. So how could we give him anything that he doesn’t have already?

Well, the one thing he doesn’t have, and he has chosen not to have necessarily, is our love. And that’s how we can actually correspond with love. And so even though we can’t pay back with anything, we can pay him back with our love. Now, you might say, “Well, our love is nothing in comparison with his love.” And that’s true, we cannot even pay him back with our love because our love is so meager by comparison. But if it is 100% of our love, then it is worthy of God, or anyone else for that matter. Because love is either 100% or it is not at all.

Think of the widow’s mite. Remember that passage in the Gospel, where our Lord is looking at how everybody is pouring all those coins into the temple treasury? And how maybe some people go there like a sport just to see which millionaire goes there? It’s kind of like they’re, you know, Hollywood stars: “Let’s see, oh, here, here’s this guy that’s coming, look at how many slaves he’s got, carrying all these bags of coins.”

And I don’t know, I don’t know what the scene would look like, OK? But, you know, everybody was looking, the Apostles were saying, “Oh, look! Look at that, he’s pulling up in a Ferrari and he’s gonna give this much” and “he’s gonna pull up in a Rolls Royce and he’s gonna give that much” and it’s like, you know, who’s who in Jerusalem back then, figuratively speaking. And everybody’s oohing and ahing and all these rich people putting a lot of money in there.

But Our Lord, kind of, he’s not, he doesn’t really pay attention to any of that. But he does pay attention to this little poor widow who gives two copper coins, two mites, as they’re called. And

he, and he's excited about that! He's like, "Did you see that? Did you see that? Look! Look!" And probably the Apostles are saying to him, "Well, what, what, what, what, what?" "Did you see?" "No, what happened?" "The widow, the widow!" "Yeah, so?" You know? "She put in two mites! Extraordinary! Amazing!" Our Lord is kind of excited about that. And probably the Apostles were like, "Yeah, and?" "No, no, don't you see? She has put in from her want, not from her surplus." Everybody else put in from what was left over. But she put in from her need.

In other words, she gave what she had for God, and she didn't care about her. God will take care of her. Because you cannot give something to God and then be fooled and say, "Oh, you know, God is not going to take care of you because you're so stupid to have given them everything." Well, no. Actually, look at St. Francis. Look at St. Anthony. Look at Mother Teresa. Look at all the great saints. When you give God 100%, he gives you a hundredfold, it says in the Gospel, right?

St. Josemaria says, "What better business do you want?" You know, invest one, get 100. I mean, not even Wall Street will guarantee that. No one on Wall Street will guarantee that. I don't care how lucky you are. It's very rare to have one for 100 anywhere. And so, but you know, it's more than a hundredfold. It's, yes, tribulations, St. Mark says, and eternal life. That's extraordinary. We cannot outdo God in generosity.

That's why, you know, one very, very, very, very dumb thing is to try to hold back, to not correspond 100% to God. And we see that with Ananias and Sapphira; I don't know if you remember those, those people in the New Testament, in the Acts of the Apostles who had some land, and they, they were very generous people, they, they, they were going to give it to God, right? To put it at the feet of the Apostles, they were gonna sell the land and put it at the feet of the apostle, but they were tempted.

They were tempted to keep a little bit, you know, maybe they kept 5%, maybe 10%. I don't know what the proceeds were. But they gave a percentage, a high percentage, to the Apostles and they kept a little bit themselves. And what happens? It's something shocking, actually. Both the husband and wife die on the spot in front of St. Peter, as a, as a kind of penance for their lack of generosity and magnanimity and giving 100%.

And you might say, "Well, really? Am I expected to sell everything that I have physically and then give it to the poor and follow Christ? But I have a family. I gotta pay my bills. I mean, I can't do that. That seems irresponsible." And here, the lesson is that it's not about doing that. The lesson from Ananias and Sapphira in the Acts of the Apostles is that they pretended to give 100%, but they were really holding back. And no one can fool God. And so, the worst thing is when we are hypocritical and we want to give 100%, but then we don't.

And it doesn't mean that we have to sell anything and give anything. And yes, it may take that means sometimes: to sell something and give something. But it's hard to sell 100% of everything, unless again, you have a special grace, like St. Francis or something like that. But even so, we are

in the world. St. Josemaria's spirit, we know, is to be in the world, to use the world, but to never abuse the world, for sure. And to never actually, you know, use it for selfish reasons.

In other words, the virtuous use of means, of human means, like money and property, and, and a car or clothes or, or I don't know, services, like internet or whatever it is. They're all good as long as we do it in order to serve God and neighbor. Then we could be, you know, really using those instruments to show love and to serve because that's the way we want to do it.

Really what we need to do is be united to God through, and to Christ, through the state of grace. When we do that, then anything we do actually takes on this Divine Love, kind of supernaturally, we are able to love in and through the fulfillment of our ordinary duties because we're united to God, we're kind of another Christ, Christ himself. As long as we're not thinking about ourselves, and we're, we're offering it up.

Well, that's what it means, "Love is repaid with love." Now, a lot of people, or some people, have come up to me sometimes every now and then. And I've seen it more than once, where people say, "Well, I really want to get married. And I hope God doesn't ask me for more like, ask me to be celibate or something like that, like be a priest or, you know, be celibate in the world or become a religious or, you know, any of the celibacies," right? Any of the states that you can have celibacy in, which is the three states of priesthood, religious life, or laity.

"Because I really want to get married," they say. Now, to me, that is an absurd consideration because to say, "I'm afraid that God will ask more and thinking that celibacy is like more than marriage, is really a, there's a false assumption there. The false assumption is that marriage is somehow, "I'm doing something for myself that I'm keeping from God." And that's, that's a terrible way to get married.

Actually, if you're, if you think that in marriage, you're going to actually have a little part for yourself, good luck getting married, because you're gonna discover very quickly that marriage is actually about giving 100%, okay? 100%. And God is asking for 100% in marriage and for 100% in celibacy. It's just that he's asking for 100% for Him through your spouse, right, and that's fine that you can offer, you can serve God through your spouse, by serving your spouse. Or celibacy by serving God directly.

But it's not like there's more demand or less demand in one or the other. It's just you have the grace if you have the vocation to live in whatever state but, you know, it just strikes me sometimes that we pit one thing against the other because we want to keep something back. And really, no, God is always going to ask for 100%. So, love is with love repaid. Let's talk about, now, about this 100%.

Right now, we have said that God asks for 100%, and He gives us 100%. And, and He gives us His 100% first and our 100% is a correspondence to that. Well, the nature of love, however, is not about giving 100%. Now, you might think I just contradicted myself. Not really. The nature of

love is actually to give more every single time. And to never be satisfied with what we have given before, which means that the more you give, the more God gives you to give him back. And that's why it's always more than 100%.

Love is never satisfied with what it has done before. Because love is not about the logic of the least or the minimums, you know, you don't say, "Well, what's the least I can do for you so that you love me?" No, no, no. You don't say, "What's the minimum, the minimum number of flowers that I need to give you in order for you to love me?" No one ever says that. "I wish I can give you all the flowers in the world because I love you." "I wish I could give you the biggest diamond in the world because I love you. I only give you this one because that's what I have." But it represents a lot more than, than that right?

I'm never, I should never be satisfied with what I have given up to now. And I shouldn't worry about it. Because as Our Lord told the Samaritan woman, "You will have a fountain from within you that will go up to eternal life." That fountain comes from God, but it's within you. So, there's always more water that comes out. It's a fountain, it's a source of water, and you don't know where the water comes from. It comes from God but is within you.

It's as if it came from you. But it's not coming from you. It's coming from above and within. But you can never be afraid of actually thinking that it's going to run out if it's divine. If it's divine, that love is always going to give more. So, we should never be afraid of giving ourselves. We can always give ourselves more. That's why St. Josemaria used to say, "Lord, may I be measured in everything except in love." I don't want to be measured in love. I want to love a lot more.

And that's why I was mentioning the first reading of today's Mass is about this correspondence. Abraham, or Abram before he became Abraham, is not afraid to put all his family at risk even for God. He trusts God. And later on, he will even sacrifice or attempt to sacrifice Isaac because God asked him for it, and he trusts God. He loves God and He knows that He who gave him his son in the first place in a miraculous way can also bring him back from life.

That's faith. That's corresponding, you know, with love. That's corresponding love with love. John Paul II or I should say, St. John Paul the Great, was a man who knew about this law of maximums, about always wanting to give more, right? and never being afraid of giving more. That's why somebody asked him, a journalist asked him very simply, "Holy Father, don't you think you are traveling too much?" And this was at the door of the airplane. And he says with a very thick Polish accent, he says "Yes, I think the Holy Father is traveling too much." And then he adds, "But I think sometimes you have to do things too much." And so there it is.

What does it mean to, that sometimes you have to do things too much? In other words, what does it mean that the right measure is to go beyond the measure, you know? If the right measure is this, then how could you keep moving the goalposts, so to speak, you know, you can't. I mean, it doesn't make sense unless we're talking about love. If you're talking about love, you can always

or you can never outdo yourself, you always can love more. And that is how we have to pay love, with love.

That's what it means to pay love with love. It means, "Lord, help me to actually love you more every single day. Help me to think less about myself. Help me to think more about the others, in view of you, in view of giving glory to you. Help me to be more mindful of you, in everything that I do, all the time, in spite of the fact that there are many things in my day, that I do that are banal or that are setbacks, or that are, you know, things that tire me out like work or, you know, relations that are not good because I get yelled at unfairly by my boss or at work or somebody cuts me off in traffic. All those things. I can actually put love where there is no love so as to reap love, as St. John of the Cross says.

Or to put it in Pauline terms as St. Paul says to the Romans, "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." So, when people curse you, you know what, that's the moment to pay with love. That's the moment to say, "I am not going to enter into your logic of hatred, I am going to love you back." Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you," Our Lord says, or St. Paul says to the Romans, "Let love be without pretense. Hate what is evil, hold to what is good. Love one another with fraternal charity, anticipating one another with honor."

So, love is with love repaid. Corresponding 100% to God's 100%. But really what that means, as we have just seen, it means outdoing that 100% which never runs out. And we can never be tired of loving. But what does it mean to give 100% if not to obliterate ourselves? Because you know, when we give 100%, then we just kind of we have to die or something because we can't keep anything for ourselves so to speak.

And we can't do that, obviously, we have to eat. And to give everything doesn't mean that we have to give away all our food and have you know, give all our food away and have nothing for ourselves or give all our clothing away and have nothing for ourselves or give all our money away and have nothing for ourselves. Well, we need something, I mean, something to survive on, right?

So, if it wasn't for a little bit of money and a little bit of food and a little bit of shelter and so on, we wouldn't be able to give it all. So, that's not being selfish. That's just being realistic. What we need to do is something on the inside, we need to think about others and not about ourselves, to uproot our ego as that's what that means. And because our love is so great, and we are capable of this extraordinary expansion of the heart, right, our heart will become huge if we give it a divine love, just like we see with the Apostles.

They were fishermen and people that were just, you know, they ran away, they denied Our Lord, they were very basic people, and rudimentary. But when they let themselves be taken by the love of God as St. Josemaria says, it's like the, like that little bird that, you know, can't even fly, you know, a couple of yards up in the air. He's taken by the eagle, mistaken for one of its brood, and is just taken to these heights, tremendous heights, where that little bird sees something that, you

know, he would have never seen before, you know, to fly that high. Well, that's what happens when we have the love of God. We see things from a very high point of view.

But because it's that big and our heart can love so much, way beyond our imagination, we need to have recourse to signs. Signs because we cannot express everything that we really have within. And so, that's why, you know, when somebody gives a diamond ring to someone they love, it's not that they, it's not that they're giving them a rock, "There's what I think of you, that you're a rock, you're a hard-headed rock. There's the hardest rock in the world. And that's what you are." It's like, "Is that what I am? That's terrible."

This is, you know, maybe somebody could say, "Well, is this what I mean to you? A dead rock? You know, at least you should've given me a flower, which is alive." You know? Or somebody could say, "Well, you gave me a flower. Is that what I mean to you? You bought it for \$1 and now, it's going to wilt tomorrow? You know, is that what I mean, is that what my love, what your love means to you? It's just something that withers?" "No, no, no, I don't mean it that way! I mean, that I really love you, that you're as beautiful as the rose," or something like that, you know.

So, we shouldn't take these gifts literally, right, that we give each other. They're signs and as signs, they become things that take us to something invisible. They make the invisible, visible. And that's kind of like what a sacrament is, you know, that's why God loves us with the signs, the seven signs that he gives us. And we have to correspond with little things that are signs of something greater.

Now, I have to say this. I am from a Spanish-speaking country. Speaking in English and speaking in Spanish, there is always a Spanish-ism that I come across in many people that speak Spanish. It's an expression that doesn't exist, that really doesn't exist in English. But many people who speak Spanish use it to describe or they transliterate it, right, into English. And it really is improper English. And that expression is called to have a "detail" with someone because literally in Spanish, it's *tener un detalle con alguien*, which means to do something small out of love for someone.

In English, we have this word, you know, this is a token of my affection. It's like a token, a small thing. It's a representative thing. And, you know, this detail. We don't, in English, you don't think that way. You say, when somebody does something nice to you, say, "Well, how nice" or "How thoughtful of you" or "That was kind of you." But you don't describe the thing itself as a detail, you know?

And I've always been critical of people who use that expression in English because it's not English, you know, let's just face it. However, to my, I guess to my linguistic chagrin, it has become ordinary Magisterium, you know, and let me explain why: Because the pope himself uses this expression. And when I, in *Gaudete et Exsultate*, no. 144, he actually talks about details, you know, "to do details" or something like that, with people that we love.

It's a good idea, right? Detail is a small thing. And it's not the whole because we cannot express the whole. It's a very small part of our love, which is a detail, right? And it doesn't pretend to be the whole, but it does pretend to represent the whole. That's why we call it "detail" in Spanish. But again, to my linguistic chagrin, because I guess I'm a purist sometimes of the English language, this has become Magisterium. And the English translation of this document talks about details, you know, and, let me read it for you:

"Let us not forget that Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to details. Now, in Spanish, this doesn't just mean little things, it means little signs of affection. The little detail that wine was running out at the party, the little detail that one sheep was missing, the little detail of noticing the widow who offered her two small coins, the little detail of having spare oil for the lamps should the bridegroom delay, the little detail of asking the disciples how many loaves of bread they had, the little detail of having a fire burning and a fish cooking as he waited for the disciples at daybreak. A community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another and create an open and evangelizing environment is a place where the risen Lord is present, sanctifying it in accordance with the Father's plan. There are times when by a gift of the Lord's love, we are granted, amid these little details, consoling experiences of God."

End quote. This is what it means to pay Love back with love. Love is with love repaid. In other words, we cannot pay 100% of what we have been given, but we could do these little details or pay attention to details of love and affection for others. That means caring with affection for, you know, well, waiting up for a loved one who is coming late or not having someone eat alone. Eating alone is, you know, I know in our culture, we're used to eating in the car or eating at our desk, but you know what, it's more human, more charitable, to actually sit down at a table and look at each other. And, you know, we're not animals, we have a conversation over a meal, we elevate it, you know, to another level. And, and that fosters friendship and charity. And, you know, gets us out of ourselves.

But if we're just kind of stuffing our faces with food, and that's it, because we want to get it over with well, missed opportunities, right? But if we actually say, "Well, maybe my neighbor wants to eat too, maybe we should eat together? Well, that would be a great detail, so to speak, that we can actually pay attention to when we are dealing with love. You know, that's the way that people feel loved. We have to humanize this world, again, with the love of God. And we have that opportunity if we are in the state of grace, and we foster the human virtues that are then elevated to the level of charity with that grace.

Well, let us end our prayer today. And turn to Mary who cared about those details. Again, she was the one who saw, who noticed the wine was missing. Why did she notice and nobody else notice? Because she cared. Because she loved much. And, you know, all these things are ways that we can learn from Mary so that we too can imitate as we go about in our daily existence and our daily, fulfilling our daily duties and going beyond duty and serving others with this love of God that we make present.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations which you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help to put them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.



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